

**NEWS RELEASE**  
November 2, 2011

**CONTACT: Bridget Kulik, 215-209-3077**  
[bkulik@sage-communications.com](mailto:bkulik@sage-communications.com)

***Embargoed until 3:00 A.M. EST***

**Brendon Bourque, 202-355-9098**  
[bbourque@metgroup.com](mailto:bbourque@metgroup.com)

**FLEISHER ART MEMORIAL WINS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL ARTS AND  
HUMANITIES YOUTH PROGRAM AWARD;  
FLEISHER TEENAGER AND DIRECTOR HONORED BY  
FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA AT THE WHITE HOUSE**

*Philadelphia nonprofit is one of only 12 youth programs in the nation recognized*

(PHILADELPHIA)—Zulmarie Nazario, 16, of Philadelphia will be at the White House today to receive an award from First Lady Michelle Obama on behalf of [Fleisher Art Memorial](#) (Fleisher), which is being recognized for its effectiveness in developing learning and life skills in young people by engaging them in the arts and creative experience. [The National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award](#) is the nation's highest honor for after-school arts and humanities programs.

Nazario is one of many Philadelphia teenagers who participate in Fleisher's Teen Lounge, a free, after-school, drop-in program where young people between the ages of 13 and 18 are offered a variety of activities, which include those that allow them to direct their own creative pursuits and explore their artistic and creative abilities in a variety of mediums. The Teen Lounge is one of many youth programs available to teens at Fleisher. The community art center's program gives South Philadelphia resident Nazario a chance to "be herself" and to try her own hand at creating art.

Today, Nazario will stand in the East Room of the White House to accept the 2011 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award from Mrs. Obama.

Chosen from a pool of more than 471 nominations and 50 finalists, Fleisher is one of 12 after-school and out-of-school programs across the country to receive the award, which is the highest honor such programs can receive in the United States. The awards are administered by the

President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH), in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The award honors community-based arts and humanities programs that make a marked difference in the lives of their participants by improving academic scores and graduation rates, enhancing life skills, developing positive relationships with peers and adults, and expressing themselves creatively.

"Having the chance to represent my peers in accepting this award from the First Lady of the United States in the White House is an experience that I'll never forget," said Nazario. "It shows me that programs like Fleisher's can change kids' lives – it's changed my life — and that people like Mrs. Obama and the President actually recognize and value what goes on in Philadelphia."

"Fleisher's program stands as a model – both locally in Philadelphia and nationally -- for others who are serving today's youth. By engaging and inspiring young people, Fleisher is giving them not just the vision but the skills to build a new and better life for themselves and their families, and for our community," said Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter. "We're incredibly proud of Fleisher and the youth involved in this program."

In addition to the national recognition bestowed on Fleisher, it will also receive \$10,000 to support its programming and engage more young people from the community.

The awards recognize and support outstanding programs that lay new pathways to creativity, expression, and achievement outside of the regular school day. These programs excite and engage a range of students, cultivating imagination, collaboration, discipline and academic success, with demonstrable results. They also provide safe harbors after school, on weekends and evenings for children and youth in some of our country's most at-risk urban and rural settings.

"We hope this award will draw attention to the fact that programs like ours are essential investments not just in the lives of our young people, but in our community, as well," said Matt Braun, Executive Director at Fleisher. "We're just elated and give much of the credit to our staff, faculty and teaching artists, supporters, board, and volunteers and of course the youth who made this happen."

###

### **Background**

The Fleisher Art Memorial was created by former businessman Sam Fleisher more than 100 years ago to give children from all economic and cultural backgrounds the opportunity to take free art lessons with professional artists. Today, more than 16,000 people each year experience the transformative power of art by participating in Fleisher’s studio classes, exhibitions, and community-based programming. Since its founding in 1898, Fleisher has engaged thousands of young people in the enriching benefits of art. In the last decade, Fleisher has provided two-hundred arts integrated residencies for over 5,000 students in the Philadelphia School District. Fleisher’s teaching artists create residencies that enhance students’ learning in science, math, and social studies through projects in a range of media, including photography, mixed media, and stop-motion animation.

Fleisher’s arts education programming reaches deeply into local schools and community centers, and has brought the organization national recognition and powerful opportunities to advocate for and shape arts education initiatives throughout the region and the country. These opportunities include its role as a lead partner in [ArtsRising](#), a new region-wide, 10-year initiative to infuse regional public schools with arts education through strategic partnerships between schools and local arts organizations.

For more information about Fleisher, please visit [www.fleisher.org](http://www.fleisher.org).